The internationalization of archaeological discourse?

ANALECTA PRAEHISTORICA LEIDENSIA 43/44

PUBLICATION OF THE FACULTY OF ARCHAEOLOGY
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

THE END OF OUR FIFTH DECADE

EDITED BY
CORRIE BAKELS AND HANS KAMERMANS

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY 2012

The Internationalization of archaeological discourse?

John Bintliff

Present disputes within Europe over the competing claims of homogeneity and regionalism in the spheres of politics and economics have their resonances in archaeological theory and practice. This paper offers a 'third way' in which a fractal perspective is seen as advantageous: a variety of approaches to doing archaeology at all scales, from the individual scholar up to the European level and beyond, is healthier and democratic and will sustain a more flexible and innovative discipline.

1 Introduction

Having moved from England (where I had taught at four different universities since 1975), to the Netherlands and in a wider sense to the European Mainland in 1999, has encouraged me over the last thirteen years to reflect on the contemporary and past differences in the way Archaeology is practised and thought about across the sub-continent of Europe. Being in Holland also allows easy interaction with colleagues in France, Belgium, Germany and Denmark, and this has been a very stimulating experience, as well again as alerting me to the special history of Archaeology in each of these countries. The Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden, with its origins in the Institute of Prehistory fifty years ago, was always international both in its intellectual horizons and to a lesser extent in its personnel, although even here particular foci on traditions of innovative research in Landscape Archaeology and Prehistory have remained amongst the strongest pillars of its archaeological community, in their turn reflecting aspects especially associated internationally with Dutch archaeology since the days of van Giffen.

In parallel with the currently-contested political and economic process of Europeanization, archaeological research in Europe is faced with a similar dilemma. Should all European countries, especially those within the European Community, encourage their archaeological methods and theory to be submerged under a uniform agenda, represented by deliberately-targeted global textbooks promoted by multinational publishing houses (for example Cultural History taught from Scarre (2009), and Archaeological Theory taught from Johnson (2010))? The radical alternative might be the cultivation of diverse regional traditions with deep roots in nationalistic scholarly schools (figs 1 and 2). In fact Kristian Kristiansen (2003) has documented how archaeological communities, even in the large Western European countries, are increasingly becoming insular in their citation of relevant literature and use less and less 'foreign language' sources beyond their own country. However I wonder if I was the only person who gained no pleasure in watching the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2004 Athens Olympics, a prolonged exercise in chauvinism with archaeology and history being the main source.

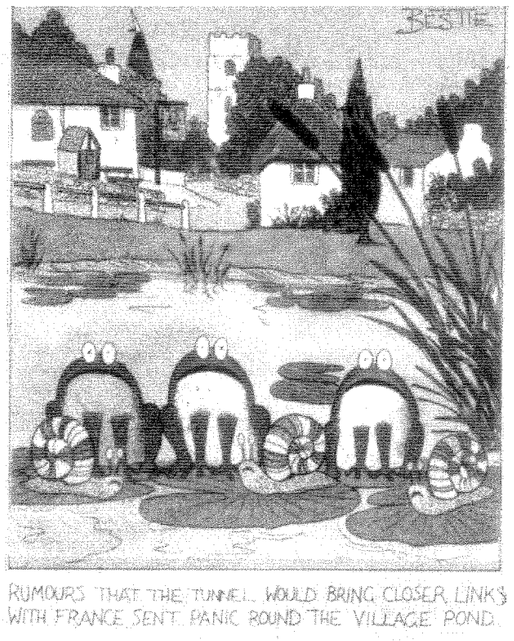
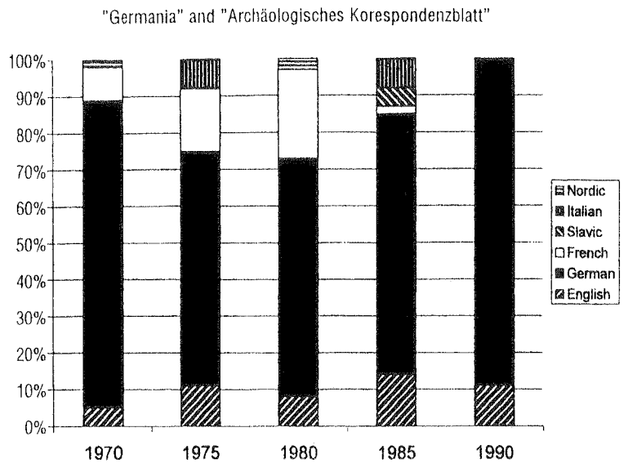
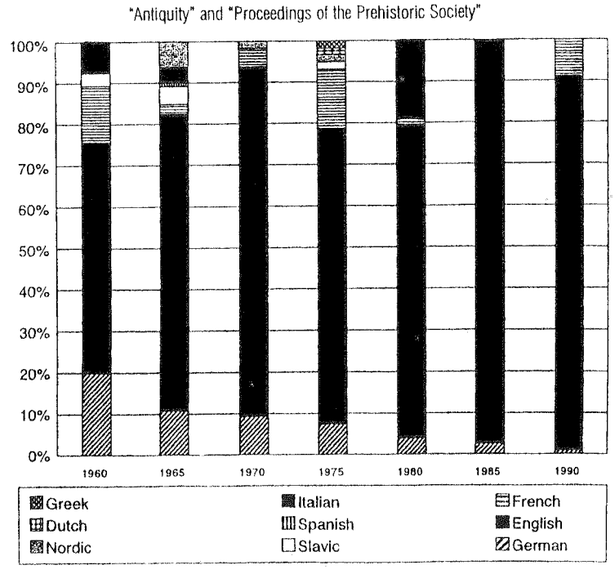


Figure 1 'Rumours that the Tunnel would bring closer links with France, sent panic round the village pond'. A humorous English postcard suggests that the construction of the tunnel under the English Channel making access from France much easier, may not be welcome to everyone. The caption reflects the imagined reactions of English snails and frogs to the perils awaiting them if French culinary culture reaches quiet traditional English villages.

Kristian Kristiansen



a References divided by language in two German journals at five year intervals (after Margalit, Bertheau and Johansson).



b References divided by language in two English journals at five year intervals (after Margalit, Bertheau and Johansson).

Figure 2 Research on the linguistic range of articles cited in major national archaeological publications in Europe over time, shows that each country is becoming more monolingual into their national tongue, despite supposed increasing Europeanization. These two examples show the results from bibliographic analysis for two key German journals and two from the United Kingdom. From Kristiansen (2003).

But there is a third clear alternative: diversity of methods and theories across Europe could be celebrated and promoted as a shared European resource, comparable to a rich library you were not aware of before, full of new and stimulating texts. Moreover, the more one learns about the national traditions of archaeology, the more one realizes that each European land has always been a mosaic of different schools of the discipline. In the terms of Chaos Theory (Coveney and Highfield 1990; cf. Lewin 1993; Bintliff 1997; 2004), we could envisage what is known as a 'Fractal Perspective', where the configuration at one level is the same as at other higher levels. Thus *within* each nation-state, with its own developmental pathway within Europe, we have also always witnessed a variety of archaeological schools linked to individual institutions, universities or even individual scholars, so that the reality of archaeological traditions is more complex than the model of 'national schools' of method and theory now under threat from a 'McDonaldization' process of European homogenization.

2 Internationalization

But just as the success and innovativeness of a particular scholar or institute often led to a wider following in the same country, giving rise to phases of a national emphasis or an approach characteristic for one European country, so we find in the history of archaeology that innovation constantly bursts the boundaries not only of the region and individual but also of the nation. Let us take the case of Gerhard Bersu (Evans 1989) (fig. 3). In the heyday of pre-War National Socialism in Germany, techniques of open-area excavation were developed and promoted as

Figure 3 Popular illustration from late 1930s Germany explaining how evidence for the activities of 'our forefathers' can be brought to light by modern activity (above), and how to report this, enlivened by a reconstruction bringing to life the surviving traces (shown below). From Crawford and Austin 1938, also reproduced in Evans (1989).

a means to expose the 'Volk' and bring the German prehistoric past to the participatory consciousness of Germans in the 1930s. Its foremost exponent, a brilliant excavator, Bersu, was invited by a group of young English archaeologists to introduce these revolutionary techniques to Britain, as a deliberate counterweight to the emphasis on stratigraphy and chronological discontinuity promoted by researchers such as Mortimer Wheeler (Hawkes 1982). A very different political context to subsequent generations, but the methodology has remained a major approach in British and wider European archaeology ever since.

In the fields of professional archaeology in Europe, involving standards for accreditation, excavation and publication, suitable terms of employment, the wider implementation of laws on heritage and the antiquities' trade, I see only positive advantages to the homogenization of practices across the Continent, and this process is actively being promoted by the European Association of Archaeologists through its linked council of professional heads of public archaeology. In the areas of method and theory regarding research goals, ways of study and interpreting new results, however, I would advocate an eclectic approach (cf. Bintliff 2000a), where the diverse ideas and practices of each country, each region, each innovative archaeologist form a rich resource for all of us to learn from, to try out. Being English and living in the Netherlands, I know this very well, because to find great cuisine in either country you should turn to a French or Belgian restaurant!

I would like to devote the remainder of this contribution to a further case-study, where I hope to demonstrate how fruitful the exploration of our new 'shared' regional traditions can be for research archaeology, and I shall take my own specialist field of Landscape Archaeology.

3 CASE-STUDY

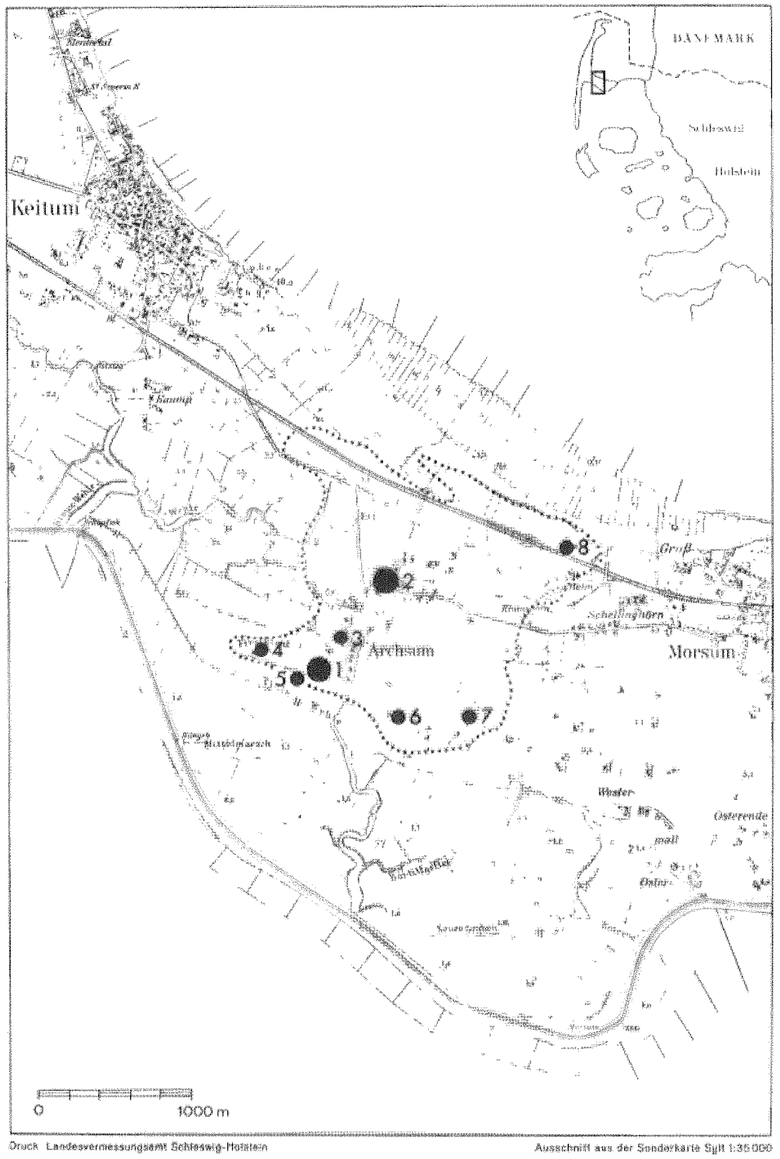
As a research student, I was astonished at the breadth and novelty, for the English-speaking world, of the project by Kossack and others on the German island of Sylt, published in 1974 (Kossack 1974) (figs 4-6). The full integration into a coherent whole of environmental science, high technology field excavation and survey, history and anthropology, still strikes one as an ideal model for a regional project – it even anticipated post-processual theory in conveying an emotional message about the story of the islanders. Yet it was only one of the most impressive amongst a German-speaking tradition of settlement research developed by geographers and archaeologists – *Siedlungskunde*.

This tradition was also very significant in regions formerly within the German-speaking political world, such as the Czech Republic. Our Prague colleagues have in recent years been innovating in this field of settlement archaeology, building on and modifying Siedlungskunde and integrating it with forms of surface field survey methodology emanating ultimately from the United States (fig. 7). The Prague concept of *Community Area* (cf. Neustupny 1991; Kuna *et al.* 1993; Dreslerova 1995; Kuna 1998; 2000) offers an important rethinking in terms of field observation of empirical data, to the older concept developed within Siedlungskunde of the 'settlement chamber' or *Siedlungskammer* (figs 8 and 9). As a result of my own fruitful research-visit to Prague some years ago I picked up many new ideas from this development which I was subsequently able to apply to my landscape studies in Greece, summarized in papers in 1999 and 2000 (Bintliff *et al.* 1999; Bintliff 2000b).

The highlighting of statistical and computer applications in the Prague landscape school reflects onto older intellectual links, a special debt to French analytical archaeology as incorporated by Soudsky and others into Czech archaeological theory in the 1960s (cf. Soudsky 1962) (and which incidentally strongly influenced Dutch landscape archaeology through the common presence of Linear Bandkeramik settlements). This leads us easily into recent French landscape archaeology, where once again there is a fruitful cross-fertilization between Anglo-American intensive field survey methods, the Gallic tradition of statistical and computer archaeology (cf. Gardin 1970), and Dutch landscape archaeology.

The Archaeomedes Project and related research programmes focused around landscape archaeologists in Provence and Languedoc, and combined French geographical concepts of landscape character (cf. Vidal de la Blache 1926) with rigorous parameterization of surface survey and test excavation data, to produce powerful trends and groups which could then be given historic meaning (Raynaud 1996; 2000; Durand-Dastès *et al.* 1998; van de Leeuw (ed.) 1998; Trément 1999) (figs 10-12). The vital theoretical stimulus of Sander van de Leeuw (a Leiden alumnus!) however reminds of the influence of personalities bridging strong regional traditions.

Finally I find equally stimulating and worthy of emulation the recent trend in British archaeology towards the hyper-intensive study of a single parish or commune, using all the range of techniques available. This must originate in the special fascination in English history, literature and ecology in the particular life of the individual rural parish (Lee 1959; cf. White 1789). In archaeology this development is best exemplified by the Shapwick Project (a village in south-west England) (Aston and Gerrard 1999) (fig. 13), which deployed total intensive fieldwalking, test pits over large areas (including digging a trench into the garden of each contemporary villager), very extensive geophysics, careful study of all placenames to the level of the different parts of individual fields, and exhaustive research in local archives. The results show that such intensity yields new data and patterns of meaning (figs 14 and 15).



Archsumer Geestkern mit Grabungsstellen.
1 Melenknop. 2 Alt-Archsum. 3 Archsum-Burg. 4 Firstklent. 5 Fundplatz 85 (Deichrest). 6 Fundplatz 59 (kaiserzeitliche Siedlung). 7 Fundplatz 44 (Hilligenört).

Figure 4 Map showing the central research zone of the German Sylt Project, the Archsum village settlement chamber, with major excavation sites and the core dryland occupation zone on this former island off the far north-west coast of Germany, by the Danish border. From Kossack (1974).

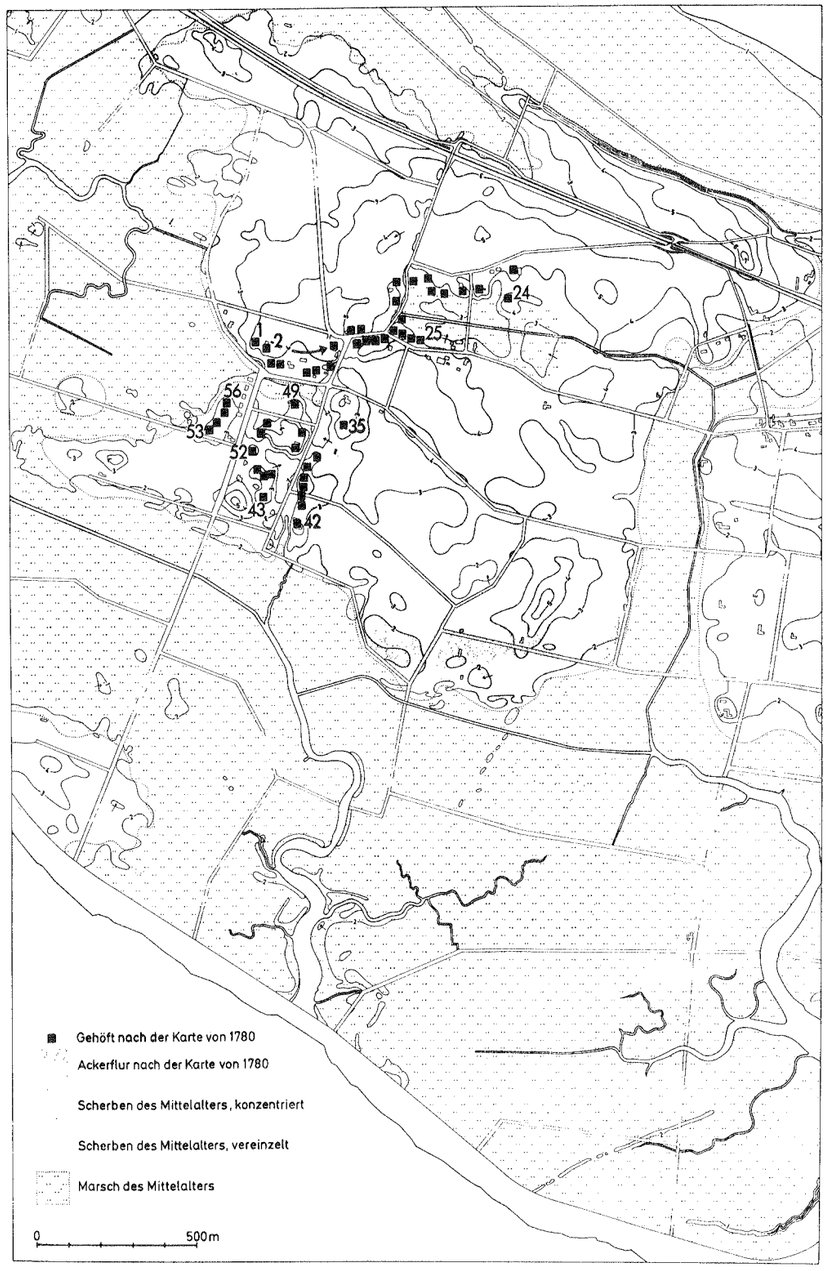
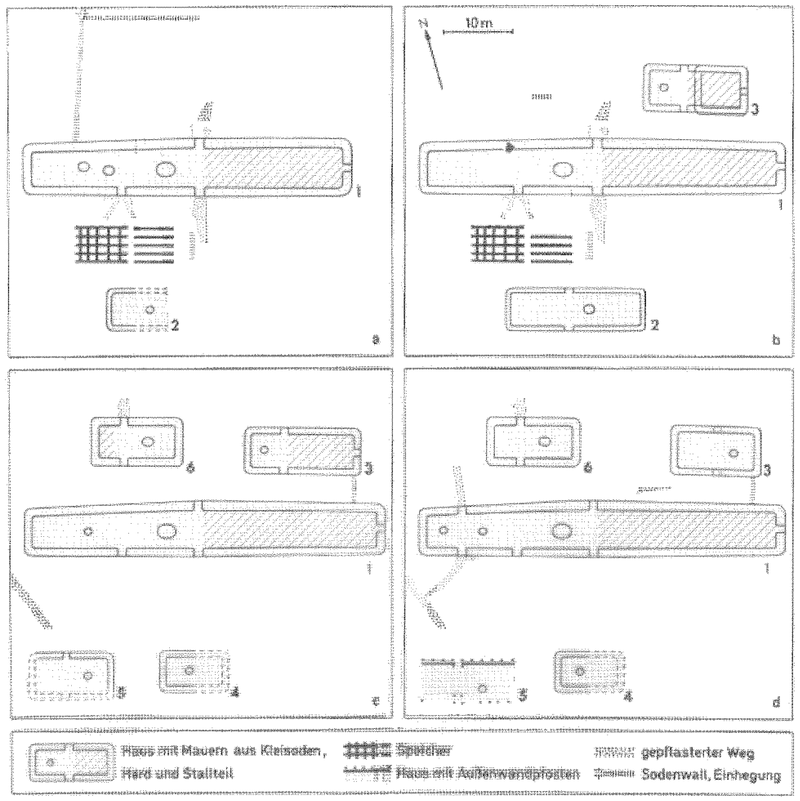


Figure 5 Medieval and Post-Medieval landscape on central Sylt, the village and settlement chamber of Archsum, with 18th century AD farms and fields, and the spread of surface Medieval sherds. From Kossack (1974).



Archsum-Melenknop. Baugeschichte des Großgehöftes der Bauperiode B 2 (ältere römische Kaiserzeit), a: Phase B 2 alt 1; b: Phase B 2 alt 2; c: Phase B 2 jung 1; d: Phase B 2 jung 2. M. 1:900.

Figure 6 Changing plans of an excavated great farmhouse complex of Roman Imperial age, the site of Archsum-Melenknop. From Kossack (1974).

4 Conclusion

A convergence is now possible, between such a microlandscape long-term study and the pioneering work of Dutch and German archaeologists such as Harry Fokkens, Jens Lüning and Andreas Zimmermann, whose meticulous excavation of large swathes of landscape allows them to follow the movement of individual households by generation in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (cf. Fokkens 1996; Zimmermann *et al.* 2004).

So my message is: let us all feast at the international table of regional delicacies, try this dish or that, then offer our own recipes up, and impose nothing.

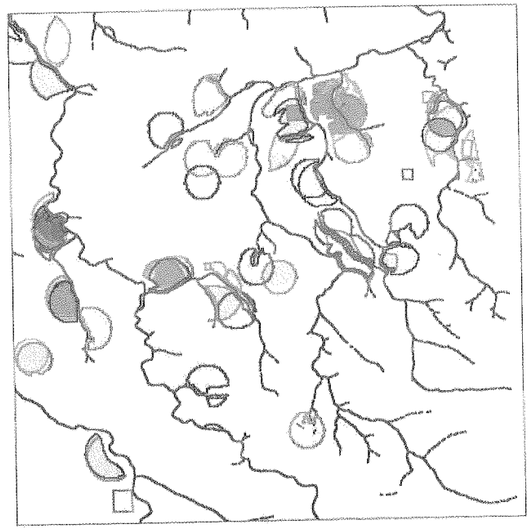


Figure 8 Hypothetical centres of settlement areas. Settlement traces from 1 (light yellow), 2 (dark yellow), 3 (orange), 4 (red), and 5 (dark red) periods. Frames indicate periods: purple – Neolithic; light green – Bronze Age; light blue – Hallstatt period; dark green – La Tène period; black – Roman period; dark blue – Early Medieval period. From Kuna (1998).

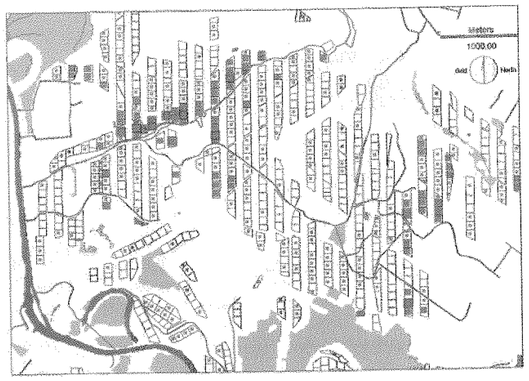


Figure 7 Field survey transect map from the Ancient Landscape Reconstruction Project in Bohemia. Distribution of sample units (survey squares) and find density. Green: woodland; yellow: villages and towns (built-up areas); blue: present streams. Red solid squares show three classes of prehistoric pottery density (1-10, 11-100, >100). From Kuna (1998).

Factor	Period	Date
Factor 3	Neolithic	5500 - 4300 BC
Factor 5	Eneolithic	4300 - 2200 BC
Factor 1	Bronze Age", including: Early-Middle Bronze Age Late Bronze Age Final Bronze Age	2200 - 750 BC
Factor 2	"Iron Age , including: Hallstatt Period La Tene Period Roman Period	750 BC - 400 AD
Factor 6	Early Medieval (EM 2?)	7-8th cent. AD
Factor 4	Early Medieval 3	9-10th cent. AD
Factor 7	Early Medieval 4	11-12th cent. AD

Figure 9 Chronological significance of the chief factors in surface finds in Bohemia identified by Principal Components Analysis. From Kuna (1998).

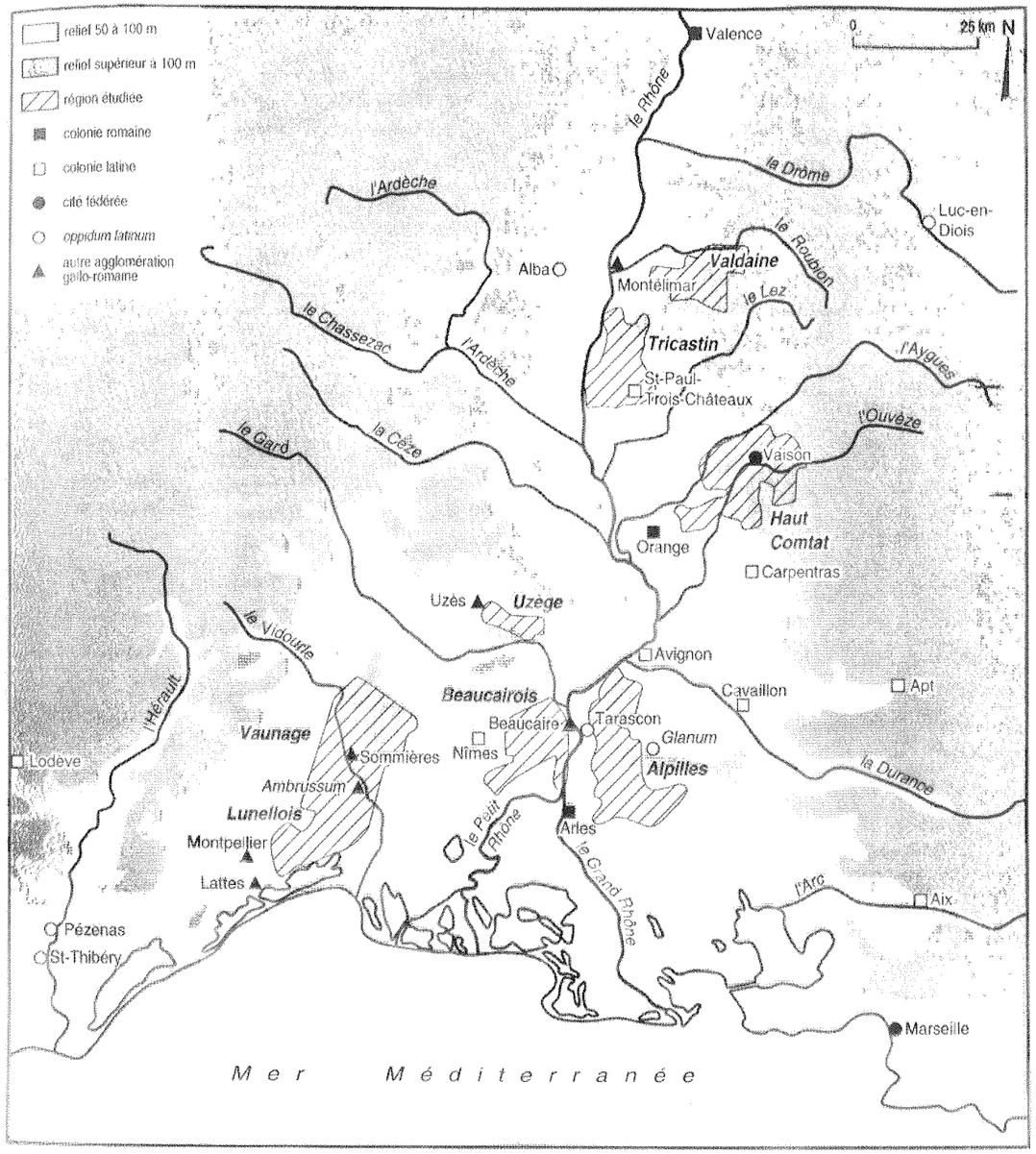


Figure 10 Map of areas studied by the Archeomedes Project in the Lower Rhône valley, France. From Durand-Dastès *et al.* (1998).

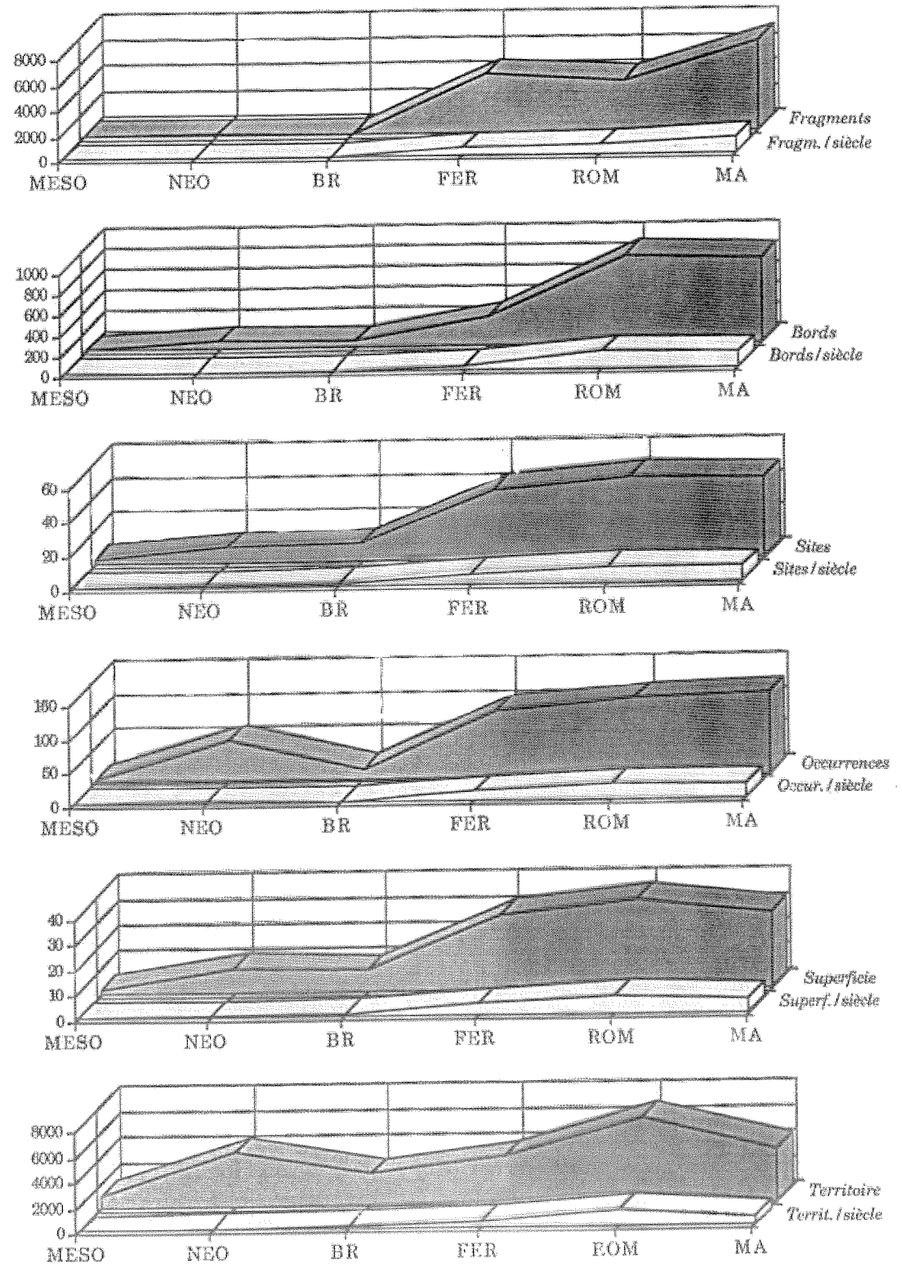
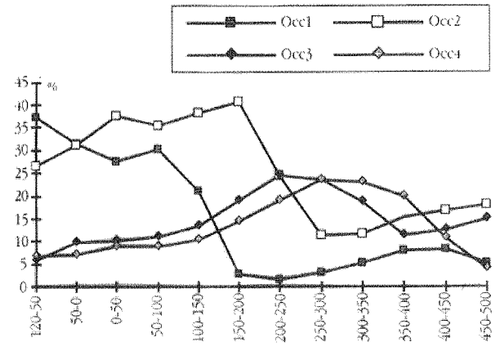
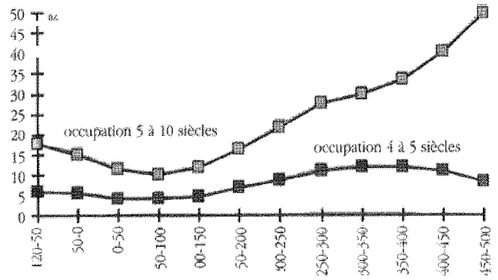


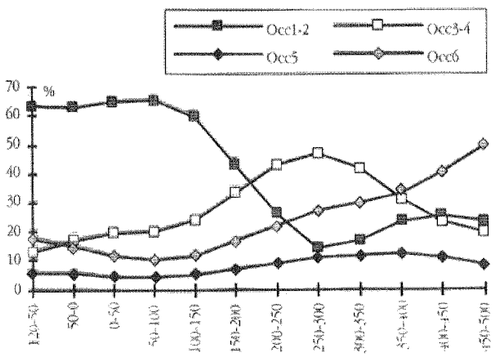
Figure 11 Analysis of surface ceramic finds from the Étang de Berre region of Provence by Frederick Trément (1999), from Neolithic to Medieval times.



Évolution du nombre de sites à durée d'occupation brève à moyenne (moins d'1 siècle, moins de 2 siècles, moins de 3 siècles, moins de 4 siècles).



Évolution du nombre de sites à longue durée d'occupation (de 4 à 5 siècles et plus de 5 siècles).



Évolution des effectifs de sites selon leur durée d'occupation (répartie en 4 classes : moins de 200 ans, de 200 à 400 ans, de 400 à 500 ans, plus de 500 ans)

Figure 12 Analysis of comparative site numbers over time and by length of occupation, in the Lower Rhône valley, from early to post-Roman times. From Raynaud (1996).

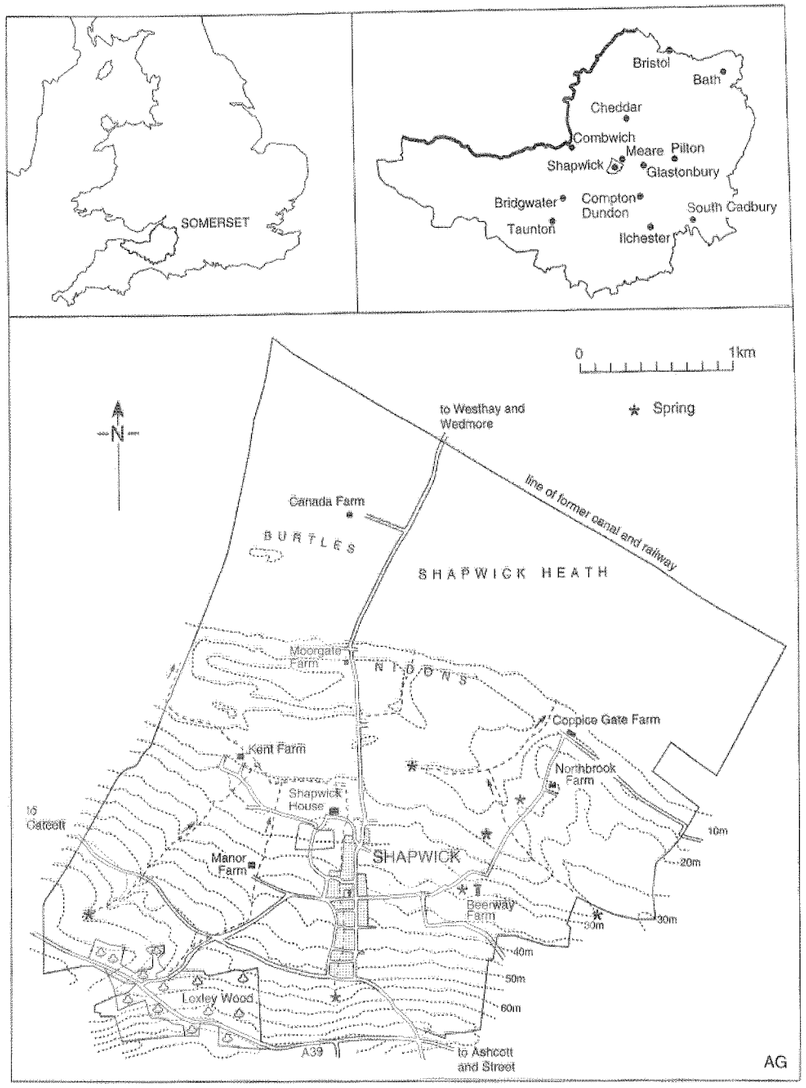


Figure 13 Location of the parish of Shapwick in the county of Somerset, Southwest England. From Aston and Gerrard (1999).

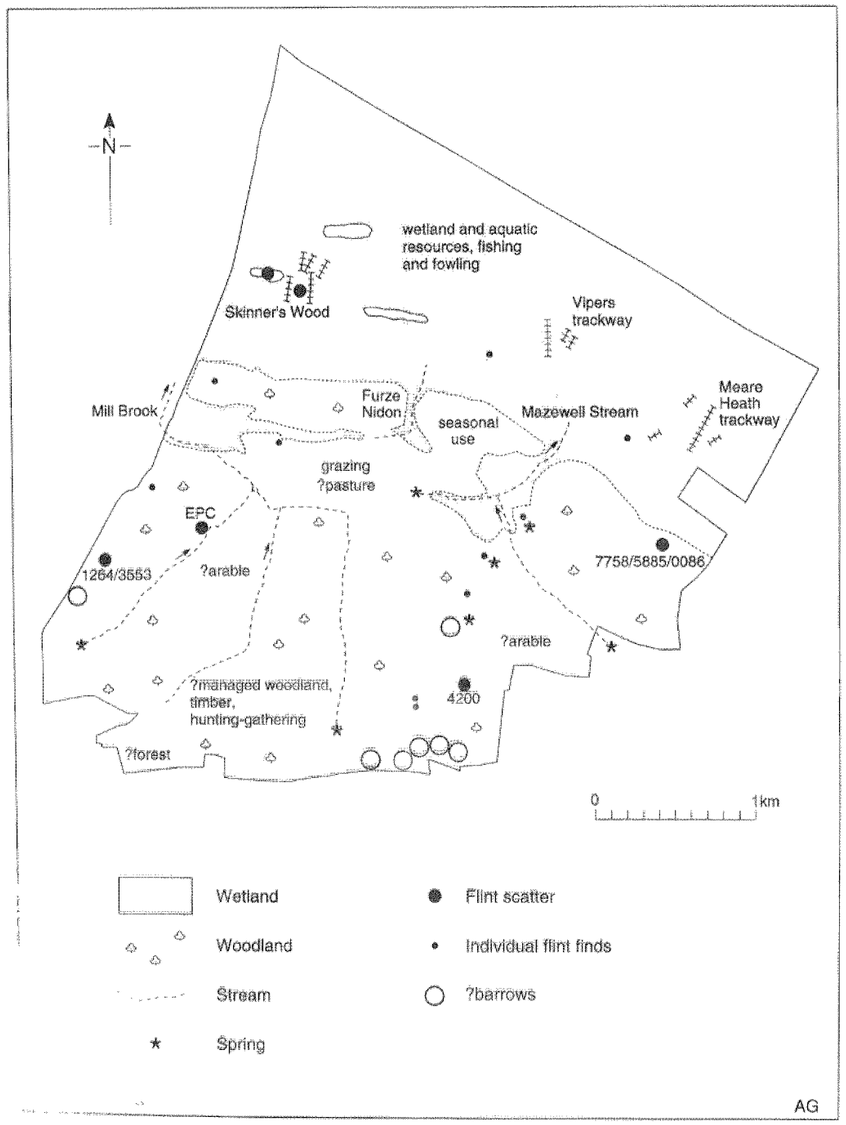


Figure 14 The parish of Shapwick. Reconstruction of settlement and land use in the Bronze Age, based on environmental analysis, surface survey and test excavation. From Aston and Gerrard (1999).

Figure 15 The Early Medieval landscape of Shapwick parish, based on surface survey, excavation, placename and official archival evidence. From Aston and Gerrard (1999).

References

Aston, M. and C. Gerrard 1999. 'Unique, traditional and charming'. The Shapwick Project, Somerset. *The Antiquaries Journal* 79, 1-58.

Bintliff, J.L. 1997. Catastrophe, chaos and complexity: the death, decay and rebirth of towns from Antiquity to today. *TheJournal of European Archaeology* 5, 67-90.

Bintliff, J. L. 2000a. Archaeology and the philosophy of Wittgenstein. In: C. Holtorf and H. Karlsson (eds), *Philosophy and Archaeological Practice. Perspectives for the 21st Century*, Goteborg, 153-172.

Bintliff, J. 2000b. Deconstructing 'The Sense of Place'? Settlement systems, field survey, and the historic record: A case-study from Central Greece. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 66, 123-149.

Bintliff, J. 2004. Time, structure and agency: The Annales, emergent complexity, and archaeology. In: J. Bintliff (ed.), *A Companion to Archaeology*, London & New York, 174-194.

Bintliff, J.L., P. Howard and A.M. Snodgrass 1999. The hidden landscape of prehistoric Greece. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 12.2, 139-168.

Coveney, P. and R. Highfield 1990. *The Arrow of Time*, London.

Crawford and Austin 1938. Editorial notes. *Antiquity* 12, 129-134.

Dreslerova, D. 1995. A settlement-economic model for a prehistoric microregion. In: M. Kuna and N. Venclova (eds), *Whither Archaeology? Papers in Honour of Evzen Neustupny*, Prague, 145-160.

Durand-Dastès, F, F. Favory, J.L. Fiches, H. Mathian, D. Pumain, C. Raynaud, L. Sanders and S Van der Leeuw (eds), 1998, *Des Oppida aux Métropoles*, Paris.

Evans, C. 1989. Archaeology and modern times: Bersu's Woodbury 1938 and 1939. *Antiquity* 63, 436-450.

Fokkens, H. 1996. The Maaskant Project: continuity and change of a regional research project. *Archaeological Dialogues* 3, 196-215.

Gardin, J.-C. (ed.) 1970. *Archéologie et Calculateurs : Problèmes Sémiologiques et Mathématiques*, Paris (Colloques int. du CNRS: Sci. humaines).

Hawkes, J. 1982. *Mortimer Wheeler: Adventurer in Archaeology*, London.

Johnson, M. 2010. *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction* (2nd Edition), Oxford-New York.

Kossack, G. 1974. Zehn Jahre Siedlungsforschung in Archsum auf Sylt. *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 55, 261-427.

Kristiansen, K. 2003. Borders of ignorance: research communities and language. In: Z. Kobylinski (ed.), *Quo Vadis Archaeologia?*, Warsaw, 38-43.

Kuna, M. 1998. The memory of landscapes. In: E. Neustupny (ed.), *Space in Prehistoric Bohemia*, Praha, 106-115.

Kuna, M. 2000. Surface artefact studies in the Czech Republic. In: J. Bintliff, M. Kuna and N. Venclova (eds), *The Future of Archaeological Field Survey in Europe*, Sheffield, 29-44.

Kuna, M., M. Zvelebil, P.J. Foster and D. Dreslerova 1993. Field survey and landscape archaeology research design: Methodology of a regional field survey in Bohemia. *Pamatky Archeologicke* 84(2), 110-130.

Lee, L. 1959. *Cider with Rosie*, London.

Lewin, R. 1993. *Complexity. Life at the Edge of Chaos*, London.

Neustupny, E. 1991. Community areas of prehistoric farmers in Bohemia. *Antiquity* 65, 326-331.

Raynaud, C. 1996. Les campagnes Rhodaniennes: Quelle crise? In: Anon (ed.), *Le IIIe Siècle en Gaule Narbonnaise. Données régionales sur la crise de l'empire*, Sophia, Antipolis, 189-212.

Raynaud, C. 2000. Territoire et peuplement en France, de l'Age du Fer au Moyen Age. L'archéologie spatiale à la croisée des chemins. In: J. Bintliff, M. Kuna and N. Venclova (eds), *Archaeological Field Survey in Europe*, Sheffield, 57-71.

Scarre, C. (ed.) 2009. *The Human Past* (2nd Edition), London.

Soudsky, B. 1962. The Neolithic Site of Bylany. *Antiquity* 36, 190-200.

Trément, F. 1999. Projet archéologique et démographique en Provence. In: J. Bintliff and K. Sbonias (eds), *Reconstructing Past Population Trends in Mediterranean Europe*, Oxford, 93-113.

van de Leeuw, S.E. (ed.) 1998. *The Archaeomedes Project – Understanding the natural and anthropogenic causes of land degradation and desertification in the Mediterranean*, Luxemburg.

Vidal de la Blache, P. 1926. *Principles of Human Geography*, London.

White, G. 1789. *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, London.

Zimmermann, A., J. Richter, T. Frank and K.P. Wendt 2004. Landschaftsarchäologie II: Überlegungen zu Prinzipien einer Landschaftsarchäologie. *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 85, 37-95.

John Bintliff
Faculty of Archaeology
P.O. Box 9515
2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
j.bintliff@arch.leidenuniv.nl

A short history of archaeological research in the Lesser Antillean archipelago

Arie Boomert

Three major stages can be distinguished in the history of archaeological investigation in the Lesser Antilles. The Early Period of research stretches from the mid-seventeenth century until well into the 1910s. It is characterized by an emphasis on the occasional collecting and rudimentary description of individual prehistoric artefacts. The next stage or Formative Period, from the 1910s into the 1960s, sees the development of stratigraphic excavation and classificatory-historical studies stressing the establishment of local chronologies in the West Indies. Finally, the Interpretative Period, from the 1960s until the present, is typified by a continuation of chronological studies next to the development of research focusing on the reconstruction of past lifeways, environmental relationships, socio-political development, and patterns of interaction.

1 Introduction

The Lesser Antilles form a gradually bending, bifurcating arc of oceanic islands stretching from the Leeward Antilles and the Margarita archipelago off the coastal zone of Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago to Puerto Rico. This island chain, which shows a high diversity in landforms and other environmental features, can be divided into three major archipelagic groupings, from south to north: (1) the Windward Islands from Grenada up to and including Dominica, as well as Barbados, (2) the Leeward Islands from Guadeloupe up to Sombrero, and (3) the Virgin Islands, Culebra and Vieques, the latter two islands both politically belonging to Puerto Rico. These island groupings become increasingly smaller in size from south to north until Puerto Rico, the first island of the Greater Antilles, is reached. Biogeographically, islands constituting arcs such as that of the Lesser Antilles are known as stepping-stone islands as they form almost uninterrupted rows of mutually intervisible islands, strung out from a mainland. The configuration of such insular chains facilitates the movement of both humans and animals into the archipelagoes in question. Understandably, the multi-staged peopling of the Lesser Antilles during prehistoric times has been a major focus of archaeological research in these islands.

In coastal areas and archipelagoes such as the Caribbean, the sea is not just the main conduit of contact between the inhabited places, it is central to human lifeways. Because of their focus on the sea, littoral and insular peoples throughout the world are closely related in terms of lifestyles and beliefs. It is the 'maritime cultural landscape' shared by these communities that should form the research interest of archaeologists and anthropologists, encompassing the material and immaterial aspects of human life on the continental seaboards and on islands. Local knowledge and lived experience are central to how people socialize seascapes. The sea achieved significance and became socially constructed in the minds of people throughout the world through their active and enduring engagement with it (Boomert and Bright 2007; Rainbird 2007, 49). The sea is universally recognized as a balance of opposites. Teeming with marine life, it provides a subsistence base to littoral people and islanders. However, the sea can be treacherous and unpredictable: it gives and it takes, it can destroy and create land, it sustains life and it may kill. The sea is both valued and feared, to be utilized as well as respected. It is the specific kind of maritime cultural landscape which developed and blossomed among the Amerindians of the Lesser Antillean archipelago that forms the focal point of archaeological and anthropological research in the region.

The historic experience of the Lesser Antilles is one of political, cultural and linguistic fragmentation, resulting in Spanish-, English-, French- and Dutch-speaking entities of varying political status, at present either part of an independent polity or linked to some metropolitan power in one way or another. This heterogeneous character of the Lesser Antilles is borne out by the development of scientific research in the region, including the history of archaeological investigation. Three major stages of archaeological research can be distinguished. The Early Period of investigation stretches from the mid-seventeenth century until well into the 1910s. It is characterized by an emphasis on the occasional collecting and only rudimentary description of individual prehistoric artefacts. The next stage or Formative Period, from the 1910s into the 1960s, sees the development of stratigraphic excavation and classificatory-historical studies stressing the establishment of local chronologies in the West Indies. Finally, the Interpretative Period, from the 1960s until the present, is typified by a continuation of chronological studies next to the development of research